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## Consumer Warning

September – December 2008

The state's first case of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) was confirmed in a three-year old white-tailed deer from a privately owned cervid (POC) facility in Kent County on August 25, 2008. As a result, all POC facilities in Michigan were quarantined.

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) is a fatal neurological disease that affects deer, elk and moose. Infected animals display abnormal behavior, progressive weight loss and physical debilitation. CWD is believed to be caused by infectious, self-multiplying proteins (prions). Prions are normal cell proteins whose shape has been transformed, causing CWD. To date, CWD is not known to cause or be associated with disease in humans. No increase in human prion disease has been observed in areas of the western United States where CWD has been endemic in cervid populations for decades.

However, because much is still unknown about prion diseases, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization advise that humans do not consume animals that have been tested and are known to be infected with CWD. In general, people should not handle or consume wild animals that appear sick or act abnormally, regardless of the cause.

CWD prions are primarily found in central nervous system tissues (e.g. brain and spinal cord) and the lymphatic system (e.g. tonsils, lymph nodes and spleen) of infected cervids. Humans should avoid the handling or consumption of these tissues. Hunters should wear disposable gloves while field dressing and de-boning meat from the carcass. Recent research has shown that CWD prions may also be found in the saliva and urine of the infected animal. Experiments conducted suggest that CWD prions can persist in the environment and may indirectly infect other susceptible animals that come into contact with the contaminated environment.

The meat product you are receiving has come from a quarantined facility under surveillance for CWD. MDA recommends you take de-boned meat from the carcass, hold the meat product in a freezer and consume it only after the facility of origin receives clarification from MDA that the animal was negative for CWD.